

Agenda item 11. Communications Evaluation Report – July to Sept 2021

Report purpose

This report provides a summary and analysis of the HotSW LEP communications team activities.

It seeks to help track and measure the effectiveness of the communications in raising the profile of the LEP as the thought-leader in economic development in the HotSW area.

With limited communications resources and budget, it is vital that this information is used to demonstrate which activities are working best for us, to inform future activity and ensure efforts are targeted for maximum impact.

Summary of communications and partnership activities

Key activity between July – September includes:

- Development of communications strategy, messaging and plan to year end
- Two stakeholder workshops with LEP leadership to identify, map and develop approach for regional and national stakeholders to support potential rural productivity deal
- Delivered a series of activity to support the LEP's clean growth campaign in the run up to COP 26 including:
 - o Production of an interactive digital clean growth map (due to complete end October)
 - o Op ed piece in SW Business Insider about the opportunity HotSW offers around clean growth
 - o Regular social media activity using the hashtag #CleanGrowthHotSW
- Created a suite of collateral to support the Annual General Meeting on 22nd October including Annual Report, LEP video, End of Programme Report
- Support LEP network national public affairs campaign 'closing the deal' by providing information to be used as proof points for campaign messages
- Issuing a series of press releases to support
 - o Ocean Futures Prospectus launch (in collaboration with the University of Plymouth and MaritimeUK SW)
 - o Supporting the launch of the first electric flight as part of the 2ZERO project
 - o Announcing funding to support digital and technical bootcamps.
- Developed draft programme of activity to support Future Leaders Programme
- Jointly delivered presentation to the Small Business Federation

- Ongoing communications to support Growth Deal and Getting Building Fund project milestones/completion
- Improving functionality of LEP website - updating the LEP's 100+ project pages on the website
- Issuing two monthly newsletters

Messaging

After a series of workshops and discussion sessions between the CEO, COO and CDO, it was agreed that the messaging behind communications activity until year end will be as follows:

Primary message

Making a difference to the economy – helping to build back better through clean and inclusive growth

The primary message is then supported by three supplementary messages, underpinned in turn by specific LEP programmes, projects and activity. There supplementary messages are:

- Helping to grow the economy in a clean and sustainable way whilst lowering emissions and enhancing natural capital.
- Improving productivity and creating a fairer economy, to deliver prosperity for all who live in the HotSW LEP area.
- Helping to strengthen this part of the UK's economy post pandemic and ensuring the area is more resilient to face future challenges.

Social media performance

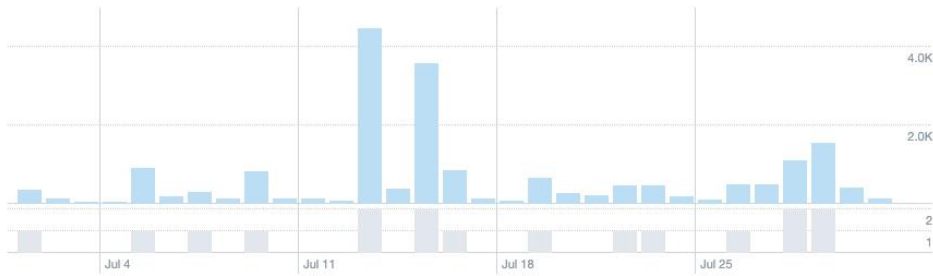
LEP owned social media channels (Twitter and LinkedIn) have been used to share our news stories, updates, and provide useful content more proactively, supported by a communications calendar to ensure we have content to share each week. As a result, engagement has remained strong on both platforms.

Twitter



- During this three-month period, the LEP earned around 387 impressions per day –down from 549 impressions/day since the previous quarter, with drop mostly due to activity being quieter in August.
- More positively though, the LEP earned the highest number of daily impressions during a 28 day period in July with around 630 impressions per day, helped by the launch of Getting Building Fund milestone projects and Plymouth's Sound's National Marine Park £9.5m Heritage Fund announcement, which received the most engagement with 4,795 impressions.
- The LEP gained around 10 followers/month between June and September (now a total of 5,066 followers).

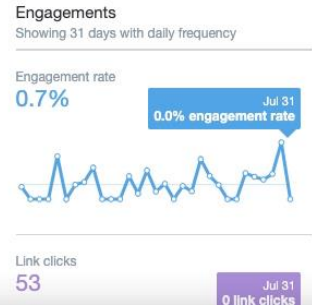
Twitter engagement in July

Your Tweets earned **19.5K impressions** over this **31 day** period



YOUR TWEETS
During this 31 day period, you earned **630 impressions** per day.

Tweets	Top Tweets	Tweets and replies	Promoted	Impressions	Engagements	Engagement rate
	Heart of the South West LEP @HeartofSWLEP · Jul 29	Fantastic to see the latest milestone on the new Grow-Out building at Exeter Science Park, which only started construction five months ago and is due for completion in November - great work from everyone involved. twitter.com/ExeterScienceP...		1,050	6	0.6%
	Heart of the South West LEP @HeartofSWLEP · Jul 29	Our July newsletter is landing in inboxes this morning. You		599	13	2.2%



LinkedIn

- On LinkedIn, the LEP gained 121 new followers, taking it to a total of 2,015 followers. Nearly 1/3 of the followers are identified as being from Exeter and nearly 1/5 are from Plymouth.
- The LEP’s engagement rate is on average around 8%, with peaks of between 10-17% for key announcements, such as the launch of the Ocean Futures programme, announcing the first electric charging points in Plymouth, and the digital and technical skills bootcamps - which received over 1,000 impressions, making it the highest performing post of the quarter. The LEP’s LinkedIn channel is a very high performing channel when compared to the rate of 2% that the industry considers good. Moving forward it is recommended that work is undertaken to make better use of this channel for maximum impact.

LinkedIn engagement – July – Sept

136 ▲385%
Reactions

7 ▲250%
Comments

16 ▲700%
Shares

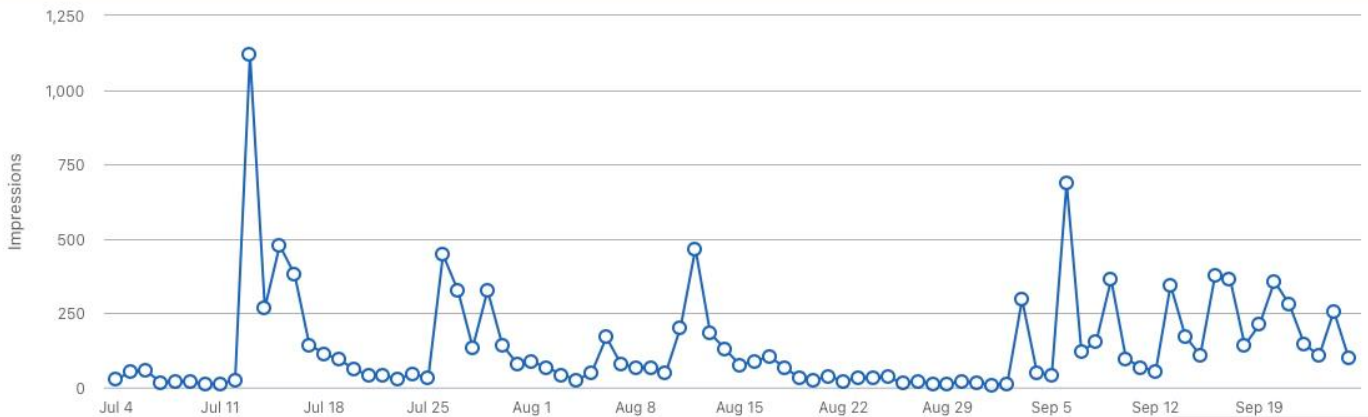
Update metrics ⓘ

Time range: Jul 3, 2021 - Sep 24, 2021 ▾

Metric: Impressions ▾

Aggregate organic and sponsored

Off

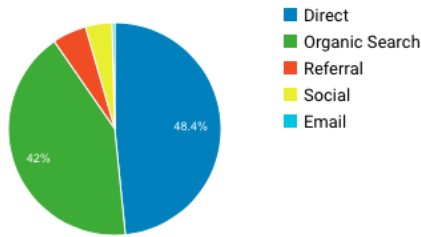


HotSW LEP website performance

Analysis shows that the LEP website still has work to do, to improve its performance and engagement levels. The recent website refresh has helped with basic navigation. The website should ideally be the main channel through which the LEP communicates with its audiences. Social media can help direct audiences to specific areas of the website; this may help overcome navigation issues in the short term.

- The average length of time new visitors stayed was 1.69 minutes. For returning visitors it was 3 minutes. In the last quarter, visitor duration averaged between 1-2 minutes, so this suggests that the changes to the website have improved the visitor experience and encouraged them to stay for longer. The industry standard for website session duration is 2-3 minutes.
- However, bounce rate is still high at 67%, which is in line with the previous quarter. This could indicate that people are not finding what they need from the site, or that they've been redirected to another site such as the Growth Hub or Skills Launchpad.
- Return visitors accounted for 17% of the users, which is a slight increase from the last quarter (14%). Websites should aim for around 30% return visitors on average.
- As expected, as the most public-facing site, the Growth Hub received higher amounts of traffic than the main LEP website.

Website sources (ie. how visitors to the website found us):



NB – Digital industry advice is that an ideal referral ratio is a 1/3 split between direct, organic search and engagement (referral/social media). This means there is work to do to encourage visitors to the website from other platforms.

Website analytics from 1 July to 30 Sept 2021	HotSW LEP	Growth Hub	Skills Launchpad*
Website visits	8,228	16,410	Not available
New visitors	5,145	12,589	Not available
Ave length of time (mins)	2:09	01.02	Not available
Ave page views	2:20	2.74	Not available
Bounce Rate	66.88%	57%	Not available
Sources (direct/organic/referral)	48/42/10%	33/28/26	Not available

* Analytics have not been provided this quarter, due to staff illness in the Skills team

Monthly e-newsletter

The newsletter format and schedule has continued in line with that reported last quarter:

- A regular publication schedule set for the last week of every month
- The overall number of stories limited to max 8, to bring it in line with the industry recommendation for engagement
- Focusing on the key areas the LEP wants to promote and be known for
- Promoted on Twitter and LinkedIn to build engagement

We have also added a dedicated section for stories badged under the Clean Growth theme.

The number of subscribers has increased by around 50 to a total of 1,651. The open rate has slipped slightly, from 25% to around 24%. Indications from our analysis are that stories about funding opportunities tend to garner greater engagement, so the lack of news stories about this in the last two newsletters could have impacted on figures.

In future we recommend undertaking research with the LEP's audiences to ask them what content they want in the newsletter and then to tweak it accordingly.

Media relations performance:

We use Google Alerts as a free tool for monitoring online media coverage. Whilst this doesn't pick up everything, it gives a basic indication of where the LEP is being featured and the subjects the media are most interested in.

Media coverage has been significantly higher this quarter, despite August being a generally quiet month. This was primarily as a result of the broad coverage achieved by the 2ZERO Project first flight from Exeter Airport.

Overall, between July – September, the alerts picked up:

- Around 70 pieces of media coverage – this compares to 19 pieces that we captured last quarter
- Main stories covered were:
 - o Getting Building Fund and Growth Deal project milestones, including Exeter bus station opening, new pontoon in Plymouth installed, UK's first immersive video dome at Market Hall and Exeter Science Park new Grow-Out building.
 - o Flight 2Zero, which generated approx. 40 pieces of coverage including BBC and ITV
- Media coverage was spread across a range of local and business media, with local BBC, SW Business Insider and Business Live the most prominent.

We don't have any comparative figures for the same period last year, and we also don't have the ability to compare to other LEPs. However, it is reasonable to conclude that media coverage has been positive this quarter, with regular ongoing news stories in media outlets that are relevant to the LEP's target audiences and the LEP being mentioned in positive news stories.

Communications priorities October- December

- Finalise the clean growth interactive map by end of October and finalise plan for launching it
- Deliver the AGM
- Initiate the public affairs campaign
- LEP quarterly business bulletin
- LEP Review
- Complete LEP website update and move onto updated CMS platform